

LYLE JACK: I guess I will start it off. I have several questions. First of all, is this to be regarded as official tribal consultation?

ERIC BOST: Sure.

LYLE JACK: This to be regarded as official tribal consultation as under President Bush's Executive Order. Second, I know you also oversee the Food Stamp Program

ERIC BOST: Yes.

LYLE JACK: I have got concerns from tribal members back at home regarding food stamps and TANIF. Where we come from, our reservation is a large land-based reservation. And I've got people who live out in the districts or out in rural areas who are on TANIF. And in order to receive their TANIF benefits or Food Stamp benefits, they must be able to find a job and hold a job and work at that job. But because of their situation and location, and job sites are very hard to find, and because they are hard to find, sometimes they have to travel to miles one way to the job site. And with the price of gas being what it is today, it's just not worth it. They lose money trying to get to their job sites, and when they do they have to quit because they can't afford to work and their Food Stamp benefits are also cut off. I'm wondering if there is some kind of change or waivers that can be applied for in order to help these people out there who are desperately in need of that help. Because to me, it makes no sense to try to work when you can't afford to work, and to have another person have their Food Stamp benefits cut also.

MR. BOST: First and foremost, the TANIF Program is somewhat independent of the Food Stamp Program. Food Stamp eligibility is determined by the assets you have, not whether you have a job or not, unless you are an adult, an able-bodied adult. The second issue is the fact that the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program is administered by Health and Human Services, who is administered by USDA. And Congress is in the midst of, for the last year, talking about reauthorization of the TANIF program. Using your example, you'd have to give me some specifics, because I find it exceptionally difficult to believe that a person who was not eligible for TANIF got off the TANIF Program, would not be eligible for food stamps. Usually if they have no income, they would definitely be eligible for food stamps. They may have to go somewhere to be recertified, and that's determined by the State, and not by us.

LYLE JACK: I will get you the specifics.

MR. BOST: Don't lose sight that we don't administer the TANIF Program.

LYLE JACK: The other question I have is, in regards to FDPIR distribution. Are you aware, or familiar with the treaties that The United States government signed with tribes across the country?

MR. BOST: Absolutely.

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LYLE JACK: So you are aware that Article VI under the constitution does state that treaties will be treated as supreme through all the lands?

MR. BOST: Yes, I am.

LYLE JACK: Okay. Under the Treaty, and I can't recall what exactly the article it is, but under the Treaty with the Sioux tribes, that the United States government made, is that in lieu of all the land that the tribes have given up and all the minerals that they have given up, the United States Government did promise to the Sioux Tribe certain benefits. One of those benefits are rations and monthly rations, as well as health, education and the welfare of the tribes. But specifically have monthly rations for tribal members. Now, I don't see how that can be a guaranteed, because it does not say in the treaty --

MR. BOST: How that can be what? I missed your last statement.

LYLE JACK: I can't see how you can come up with an income guideline to overrule these certain promises that were made, guarantees. Now it doesn't say anything about income guidelines in the treaty. It strictly says that in lieu, because we feel we've paid for these benefits by giving up all the lands to the United States. That's the question I have, and I don't think you can answer it, but maybe I could just make you aware of it.

MR. BOST: Well, I think it's an opportunity for us to sit down and look at it. The formula for the determination of those benefits has not been reviewed in many, many years. And given the responsibility that I have, in terms of management of this program, I'm always going to look for opportunities where I believe that we can be much more efficient, much more equitable, in terms of the administration of the programs, and that's what we are doing. We are going to look at these programs.

LYLE JACK: That's all I have for now.